



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Major Hazardous Materials Accident Management Measures

Before a Major Hazardous Materials Accident

- Contact your emergency management agency to determine if you are at-risk to be exposed dangerous hazardous materials from an accident. More specifically, do you live near a chemical plant or a hazardous material transportation route? If yes, you should take special precautions to protect your family.
- Develop an evacuation plan. (See Section 2.2)
- Learn about industry and community warning signals.
- Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio with a tone-alert feature to keep you aware of warnings.
- Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit. (See Sections 2.3 – 2.4)

During a Major Hazardous Materials Accident

If at home:

- If you hear a siren or other warning signal, turn on a radio or television for further emergency information. In addition, you may be notified by emergency officials if you are at risk from a hazardous materials accident.
- Listen carefully to the radio or television for specific information and instructions including the type of health hazard, the area affected, how to protect yourself, evacuation routes (if necessary), shelter locations, and the phone numbers to call if you need extra help.
- Call EMS, 9-1-1, or the operator only for a possible life-threatening emergency. Telephone lines are frequently overwhelmed in disaster situations. They need to be clear for emergency calls to get through.

If at the scene of a hazardous materials accident:

- Call 9-1-1 or the local fire department to report the nature and location of the accident as soon as possible.
- Move away from the accident scene and help others move away. Minimizing the time you are exposed reduces your risk.
- Stay away from the spilled substance and avoid touching it.
- Try to avoid inhaling gases, fumes, or smoke. If possible, cover your mouth with a cloth while leaving the area.
- Stay away from accident victims until the hazardous material has been identified. Once a substance has been identified and authorities indicate it is safe to go near victims, you can move victims to fresh air and call for emergency medical care.
- Cleanse victims who have come in contact with chemicals by immediately pouring cold water over the skin or eyes with running water.
- Try to stay upstream, uphill, and upwind of the accident.

If instructed to shelter in place:

- Time permitting, seal house so contaminants cannot enter:
 - Close and lock all windows and doors in your home.
 - Turn off all fans, heating systems, and air conditioning systems.
 - Close the fireplace damper.
 - Seal gaps and cracks under doorways and windows with wet towels and duct tape.
 - Seal gaps around window and air conditioning units, bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans, and stove and dryer vents with duct tape and plastic sheeting, wax paper, or aluminum wrap.
 - Close off nonessential rooms such as storage areas, laundry rooms, and extra bedrooms.
 - Fill up bathtubs or large containers for an additional water supply and then turn off the intake valve to the house to avoid potential contamination.

- Take family members and pets to a safe room.
- Go to an aboveground room (not the basement) with the fewest windows and doors – perhaps a bedroom with an attached bathroom.
 - Take your Family Disaster Supplies Kit with you. These items may make you more comfortable while you are waiting for further instructions.
 - Stay in the room and listen to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate.
 - If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains. To avoid injury, stay away from the windows.
- If gas or vapors have entered the building, take shallow breaths through a cloth or a towel.
- Avoid eating or drinking any food or water that may be contaminated.

If asked to evacuate:

- If an evacuation order is issued, listen to your radio to make sure the evacuation order applies to you, and to understand if you are to evacuate immediately or if you have time to pack some essentials. Stay tuned to a radio or television for information on evacuation routes, temporary shelters, and procedures. Following the advice of local authorities is your safest choice.
- Take your Disaster Evacuation Supplies Kit. (See Sections 2.2 – 2.4)
- Follow the route authorities recommend. Don't take shortcuts on the way to the shelter; they may be blocked or expose you to dangerous chemicals.
- Use your telephone only in life-threatening emergencies. Call only the poison control center, EMS, 9-1-1, or the operator immediately. Telephone lines are frequently overwhelmed in disaster situations.
- If you need a ride, ask a neighbor. If no neighbor is available to help you, listen to local radio or television stations for further instructions.

- Check on neighbors to make sure they have been notified; offer help to those with disabilities or other special needs.
- Take only one vehicle to the evacuation site. Traffic may be very heavy and parking at a shelter may be limited.
- Close your car windows and air vents and turn off the heater or air conditioner. Many chemicals can cause damage to breathing passages.

After a Major Hazardous Materials Accident

- Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- Follow local instructions concerning the safety of food and water.
- Clean up and dispose of residue carefully. Follow instructions from emergency officials concerning cleanup methods. Local officials will best know proper procedures for your particular situation.

Adapted from resource material developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and resource material developed by the Idaho Extension Service entitled "Responding to Idaho Disasters: Hazardous Materials Accidents"